Lambda Letters Project

Vol. 12, No. 1 January, 2004 www.lambdaletters.org LambdaLP@aol.com (916) 728-1261

LLP's Annual Meeting

It's almost time again for our annual meeting. Lambda Letters' annual meeting for 2004 will start at 1 PM on Saturday, January 31. You are cordially invited to attend.

Here's the address: Lambda Community Center, 1927 L Street (first floor), Sacramento. The building is on L Street between 19th and 20th Streets.

We look forward to receiving your ideas and input at our annual meeting. ###

LLP Tops Quarter-Million Letters!

By Boyce Hinman, Chief Lobbyist

This year the Lambda Letters Project delivered over 250,000 letters and e-mails to elected officials. The year-end total will be at least 35,000 mail pieces higher than last year, which was the highest year on record for Lambda Letters.

So far as we know, this record represents more constituent mail pieces delivered than by any state organization in California and perhaps in any other state

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Lambda Letters Needs Skilled Fundraisers

By Boyce Hinman, Chief Lobbyist

By most measures, Lambda Letters is one of the most successful lobbying groups for the LGBTI community in California. This year alone we delivered over 250,000 letters and e-mails to elected officials from people like you. In 2003 more laws benefiting our community were enacted than in any prior year. We think the mail generated by Lambda Letters had much to do with that fact.

We have been in existence since 1988 and we are recognized by legislators and other lobbying groups for the quality work we do. For example, we have letters of commendation from six current and one former legislator. We have similar letters from the AIDS Healthcare Foundation, California NOW, the Elections Committee of the County of Orange County (ECCO), and other, similar organizations.

We have attracted a number of talented volunteers who work in our lobbying program. It is their skill and dedication that has made Lambda Letters one of the preeminent lobbying groups for our community in California.

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Lambda Letters Progress Report

Letters & Messages Collected

November, 2003	18,383 letters & e-mails
In all of 2003	254,531 letters & e-mails

Dollars Spent

November, 2003	$4,112
In all of 2003	$49,255

Can You Help?

Please support the very important work of the Lambda Letters Project with your contributions.

Lambda Letters Project

Mission Statement

To promote the social, economic, and human rights of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex individuals, couples, and families; people affected by HIV/AIDS; people of color; and women by urging elected officials to enact and support legislation that accomplishes this goal.

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☐ Yes, I want to make a donation to help LLP continue its important work.
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If so, you may register a complaint with the Department of Fair Employment and Housing. In cases of employment discrimination, call the department at (800) 884-1684. In cases of housing discrimination, call (800) 233-3212.
The person answering the phone will schedule an appointment for you at the Department of Fair Employment and Housing Office which is closest to your home or place of employment.

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People of Color Issue

Help Bush Commit to Asian Americans

By Marty Martinez, LLP Analyst

President Bush has sent contradictory signals regarding his commitment to Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders (AAPIs) and we must urge him to renew that commitment.

On June 6, 2001, Bush signed Executive Order 13216 regarding the White House Initiative on AAPIs to increase opportunities for—and improve the quality of life of—approximately 13 million AAPIs living in the United States and its Pacific Island jurisdictions. This action renewed the President's Advisory Commission on AAPIs. Now the commission is in jeopardy and new action by Bush is needed to keep it alive.

The commission, initially created by President Clinton, called for a coordinated federal government-wide workgroup to improve the quality of life of AAPIs in areas where they may be underserved. This initiative addresses AAPI concerns in a variety of areas, from health to education, housing, labor, and economic and community development. The Executive Order expired in June 2003, effectively ending the terms of the current commissioners and eliminating this highly successful initiative.

Because AAPIs are this country's fastest growing minority group, it is imperative that all federal programs are inclusive of, and effective in, serving the AAPI communities. AAPIs can be found at the extremes of almost every socioeconomic indicator: from wealth to poverty, advanced education to illiteracy, and entrepreneurial success to marginal daily survival.

Both the initiative and the commission have played instrumental roles in fostering improved data collection and research on AAPIs, as well as proposing meaningful public/private partnerships to support future growth and development within the AAPI community. They have also coordinated outreach and education efforts between federal agencies and AAPI communities so that both can understand better the challenges facing the population while working towards productive solutions to address them. All this good work must not be allowed to lapse because of presidential inaction. Please sign and send back the enclosed letter to President Bush. ###

Lesbian/Gay/Bisexual/Transgender/Intersex Issue

Support Domestic Partner Benefits for Federal Employees

By Teri Ford, LLP Analyst

The Domestic Partnership Benefits and Obligations Act of 2003, known as S 1252 and introduced by Senator Mark Dayton (D–Minn.), entitles the domestic partners of federal employees to receive benefits previously available only to spouses.

Benefits would include the normal federal employee retirement benefits, including life insurance, health insurance, and worker's compensation. The bill also states that the value of these benefits would not be considered taxable income for federal income tax purposes. The bill has nine cosponsors in the US Senate.

The bill has languished since June in the Subcommittee on Financial Management, Budget, and Internal Security of the Senate Committee on Governmental Affairs.

Although Senator Boxer is a cosponsor of the bill, Senator Dianne Feinstein is not. Please write to Senator Feinstein and urge her to become a cosponsor and do all in her power to get the bill moving and approved by the Senate.

Domestic partners are not allowed to marry, yet they share the same commitments to their relationships as married couples, as well as the same obligations and responsibilities. They should enjoy the same rights as well.

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Women's Issue

Make Emergency Contraception Easier

By Adrienne Lauby, LLP Analyst

Despite recent Congressional passage of a restrictive antichoice law, women are poised for a significant increase in their access to reproductive choice. With your help, the US Food and Drug Administration (FDA) may soon upgrade a prescription emergency contraception drug to over-the-counter status.

According to the Emergency Contraception Website, operated by the Office of Population Research at Princeton University and by the Association of Reproductive Health Professionals, emergency contraceptive pills contain hormones that reduce the risk of pregnancy if taken within 120 hours (5 days) of unprotected intercourse. The treatment is more effective the sooner it begins. (Source: *http://ec.princeton.edu/info/ecp.html*)

The women's rights movement fought for nearly a decade to make this type of emergency contraception available in the US. Although it's used widely and safely in Europe, antiabortion hysteria predicted medical disasters if emergency contraceptive pills were permitted. According to Planned Parenthood, a recent study of 235 women who used these pills found that the overwhelming majority, 91 percent, were satisfied with the method and 97 percent would recommend it to their friends and family. These women also reported that they did *not* intend to substitute emergency contraception for regular contraceptive use. (Source: *www.plannedparenthood.org/library/birthcontrol/ec.html*)

Health workers understand that many women have difficulty finding a prescribing doctor, especially on the

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HIV/AIDS Issue

Support Early Medi-Cal AIDS Coverage

By Jamie E. Shauvin, LLP Analyst

The Early Treatment for HIV Act (ETHA) would allow states to extend Medicaid (called Medi-Cal in California) eligibility requirements to include more people with HIV. It would allow states to use Medicaid funds to provide medical care to predisabled people living with HIV. This bill has been stuck in the Finance Committee of the US Senate since April 9, 2003.

This month please write to senators Dianne Feinstein and Barbara Boxer and urge them to do whatever is needed to get S. 847 moving through the legislative process.

There's a cruel irony in the current Medicaid system. Currently it requires that people become disabled by AIDS *before* they qualify for receiving healthcare through Medicaid. That care, if given early enough, could have prevented them from becoming ill in the first place. ETHA would bring Medicaid coverage into line with medical standards of care for treating people with HIV. By preserving the health of people living with HIV, preventing opportunistic infections, and slowing the progression to AIDS, ETHA will save taxpayers many millions of dollars. By implementing ETHA, the US will take an important step toward ensuring that all people living with HIV can get the medical care they need to stay healthy and productive for as long as possible.

ETHA was introduced in the US Senate as S. 847 by Gordon Smith (R–Ore.) and Hillary Clinton (D–NY). Senators Smith and Clinton have sent a letter to their colleagues in the Senate asking them to cosponsor the bill. As of December 8, 2003, 19 senators had

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January Legislative Update

As you can see, the following list is unusually short. In fact, it contains only bills related to issues affecting people of color. What's going on? Why don't we also list bills that relate to HIV/AIDS issues; lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and intersex (LGBTI) issues; and women's issues?

Actually, this is a sign of good news for all of us. The good news is that virtually all the LGBTI bills we supported in 2003 were approved by the legislature and signed by Governor Davis. Most of the HIV/AIDS bills and many of the women's bills we supported were also passed and signed. The following is a list of the remaining bills from 2003 that we have been following and which are still alive. In future newsletters we will be adding bills in the other categories as those bills are introduced.

There is a crucial deadline that applies to these remaining bills. Any bill that was introduced in one house in 2003, and has not yet been approved by that house, must be approved by that house no later than January 31, 2004. For example, SB 57, listed below, was introduced in the Senate. It is now in the Senate Appropriations Committee. If it is not approved by that committee, and then by the full Senate, by January 31, it will be dead. Period.

Some bills in the list have been approved by their house of origin and then sent to the other house. These bills have much longer deadlines for approval. To find out where one of the bills listed below is in the legislative process, check its status line.

If you see the words "reconsideration granted" on the status line, that means the bill lost the last vote that was held on it. However, the author of the bill was granted permission to seek a new vote on the bill.

By the way, any bill with a name beginning with "AB" was introduced in the Assembly. Any bill name beginning with "SB" was introduced in the Senate.

People of Color Issues

AB 25 (Fabian Nunez, D–Los Angeles)
Purpose: To require state agencies to accept as valid identification of a person a foreign identification card issued by another nation, as defined, to its citizens or nationals, subject to specified exceptions. Would allow police officers to request additional ID if the officers thought the original ID might be a fake.
Status: Sent to the Senate floor for a final vote in that house.
LLP Position: Support.

AB 292 (Leland Yee, D–San Francisco)
Purpose: To provide that a state or local governmental agency, or a public or private agency supported by state funding, shall not use any child, or permit any child to be used, as a translator or interpreter in any matter involving the business or function of that agency except as specified. Also to require each agency that receives state funding to have available for inspection an established procedure for translation services that provide

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What happens when women put pen to paper... brush to canvas... lens to scene?

Sparks

spark — n. 1. A fiery particle resulting from friction. 2. A flash of light. 3. A trace or suggestion. 4. A vital, animating or activating force.

Sparks is a forum for the creative and intellectual expression of women through short stories, essays, articles, poetry, photography, and art. Contact us or check out our website for information on submissions and subscriptions.

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Legislative Update

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competent translation services.
Status: Currently in Senate Appropriations Committee.
LLP Position: Support.

AB 570 (Judy Chu, D–Monterey Park)
Purpose: Existing law requires people engaged in a garment manufacturing business to register with the state labor commissioner and pay a registration fee. Part of the fee goes into a special fund to compensate garment workers who aren't paid their wages, expenses, or benefits by a garment manufacturer, jobber, contractor, or subcontractor. This bill would authorize the state to use *all* the special funds every year to compensate workers who have been harmed.
Status: Currently in the Assembly Appropriations Committee.
LLP Position: Support.

AB 858 (Jackie Goldberg, D–Los Angeles)
Purpose: To generally prohibit public schools from using certain specified terms as a school or athletic team name, mascot, or nickname.
Status: Failed in the Assembly. Reconsideration granted.
LLP Position: Support.

AB 1657 (Wilma Chan, D–Oakland)
Purpose: To prohibit the sale, offering for sale, distribution, or import into this state of any *prepackaged* gelatin-based (like Jell-O) alcoholic beverage unless it is sold, offered for sale, or intended to be sold in a business establishment (for consumption on the premises) that prohibits the presence of persons under 21 years of age on its premises.
Status: Currently in the Senate Governmental Organization Committee.
LLP Position: Support.

SB 17 (Martha Escutia, D–Norwalk)
Purpose: To amend the laws relating to property taxes on nonresidential commercial and industrial property to eliminate loopholes that have allowed such properties to evade reassessment upon sale of the property. This bill would increase tax revenues and reduce the need to cut spending on health and social services programs.
Status: Awaiting a final vote in the Assembly.
LLP Position: Support.

SB 57 (John Burton, D–San Francisco)
Purpose: To adjust the hourly minimum wage on January 1, 2004, and annually thereafter, to maintain employee purchasing power.
Status: Currently in the Senate Appropriations Committee.
LLP Position: Support.

SB 101 (Wes Chesbro, D–Santa Rosa)
Purpose: To require most healthcare service plans and disability insurance policies to provide coverage for the treatment of medically necessary substance-related disorders, excluding caffeine-related disorders, on the same basis as they provide coverage for any other medical condition.
Status: Currently in the Senate Insurance Committee.
LLP Position: Support.

SB 921 (Sheila Kuehl, D–Los Angeles)
Purpose: To declare the intent of the legislature to implement a single-payer, universal healthcare delivery system in California.
Status: Currently in the Assembly Health Committee.
LLP Position: Support. ###

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Lambda Letters to Publish Two Booklets

By Boyce Hinman, Chief Lobbyist

In partnership with the National Center for Lesbian Rights, Lambda Letters plans to publish two booklets of interest to the LGBTI community. The first is about the rights of transgender people under AB 196. The second is about the rights and duties of domestic partners in California due to 14 bills passed by the state legislature since 2000. This latter booklet will also reflect the terms of a ruling by the State Board of Control issued in 2003.

AB 196 was passed in 2003. It prohibits employment and housing discrimination in California against transgender individuals. People who experience such discrimination may submit complaints to the California Department of Fair Employment and Housing (DFEH), which tries to resolve the problem through investigation, negotiation, and sometimes with court action against employers and landlords who violate the law. DFEH may also issue "right to sue letters" to people who have experienced illegal discrimination.

The booklet will explain the complaint process in more detail. This booklet is being prepared by an attorney who previously worked for the California Fair Employment and Housing Commission.

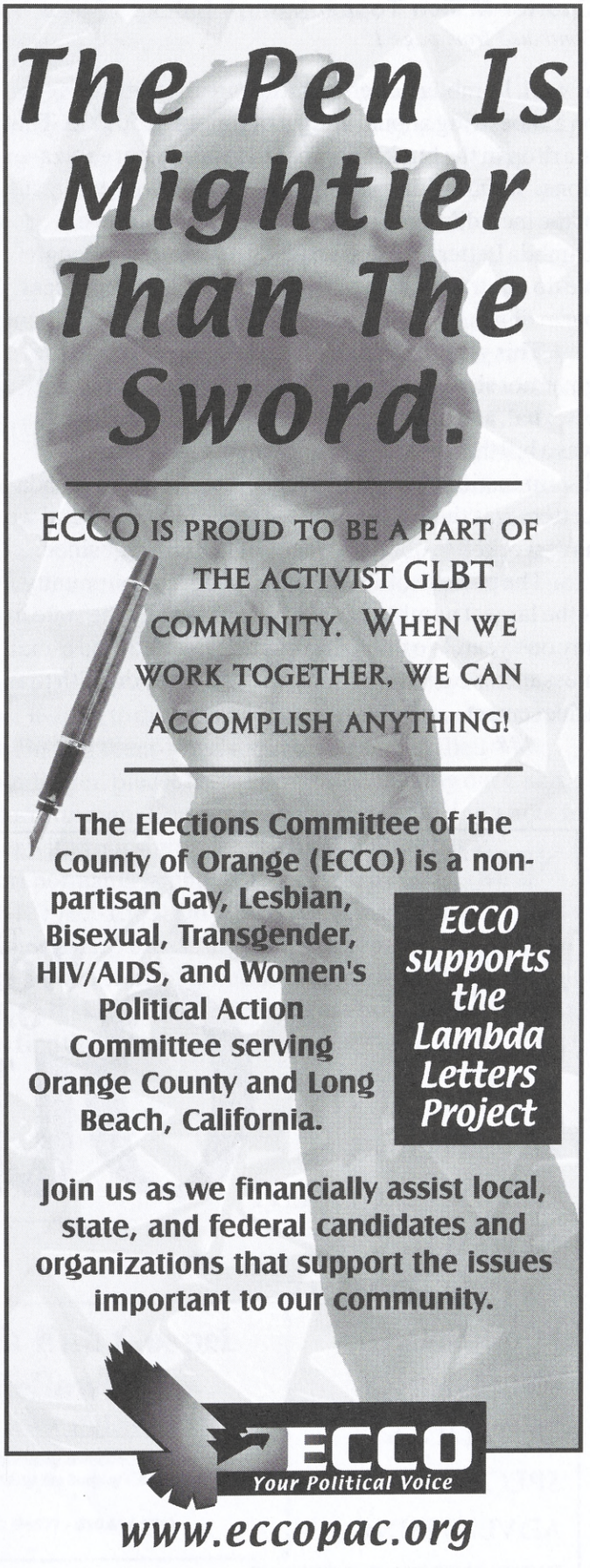
The booklet on domestic partner rights and duties is being prepared by attorneys connected with Lambda Letters and attorneys from the National Center for Lesbian Rights. One of the attorneys is a current member of the Lambda Letters board of directors and the other is a former board member. We may seek additional help with this booklet from attorneys with tax and estate planning experience.

We plan on releasing both booklets sometime in the spring of 2004.

###

Contact Your Members of Congress!

You'd be amazed how easy it is. Call them toll-free at (800) 648-3516.
Ask the operator to transfer you to your legislator's office.
If the line is busy, try again later; you'll get through eventually.
Don't know who represents you in Congress?
Visit the Lambda Letters website:
www.lambdaletters.org
Click on the Who Represents You link in the left navigation bar to find out!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Quarter-Million Topped!

Continued from page 1

as well. Lambda Letters continues to offer its services on a shoestring annual budget of roughly $50,000. That is a drop in the bucket compared to similar organizations. We are able to keep our costs this low as a result of the incredible generosity of our many volunteers. Lambda Letters still has no paid employees, although we do contract with a person in San Diego to process our mailings.

This year the state legislature approved, and the governor signed, 10 bills that benefit lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender Californians. One of them was a bill that prohibits employment and housing discrimination against transgender individuals. Lambda Letters was the first to propose this bill in 1998 and we have worked to obtain passage of the bill ever since.

The passage of 10 bills benefiting our community is the largest number of such bills passed by the state in any one year. We think the number of letters and e-mail messages we delivered for you has a lot to do with that achievement.

###

HIV/AIDS Issue

Continued from page 4

signed on as cosponsors, including senators Feinstein and Boxer.

ETHA received a major boost when a PricewaterhouseCoopers study revealed significant health and economic benefits if the bill passes. The most dramatic finding was that over a ten-year period, ETHA could cut in half the death rate of people with HIV on Medicaid. It also found that, over a period of ten years, ETHA would save Medicaid $31.7 million.

Please support ETHA by writing to your US senator and urging her to do whatever is needed to get this bill moving through the legislative process. ###

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Women's Issue

Continued from page 4

weekend. The FDA has agreed that the pill is safe. Their only concern is whether women will follow the prescription's directions if they're written on a package or insert, or whether they need face-to-face counseling.

A recent study indicates that they can handle written instructions. According to the FDA Advisory Committee, the December 2002 issue of *The Lancet* found that 96 percent of women understood that the regimen's two 0.75 mg tablets should not be taken at the same time and that 86 percent of women understood that the pills should be taken at 12-hour intervals.

The sooner emergency contraception is taken, the better it works. This makes timely access to it critically important. Research indicates that widespread availability of emergency contraception could prevent 1.7 million unintended pregnancies and 800,000 abortions each year in the US.

Emergency contraception drugs meet all customary criteria for over-the-counter availability, including low toxicity, no potential for overdose or addiction, self-indication of need, uniform dosage, and no important drug interactions. Virtually all major medical and health care organizations, including the American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists, support allowing over-the-counter emergency contraception.

Whipped by the constant rhetoric of the Right, the so-called "partial-birth abortion" ban passed in Congress and is headed to the Supreme Court. Lambda Letters joins feminists in hoping the Court rejects this wide-ranging ban on common abortion procedures.

In the meantime, your letter to the FDA in support of over-the-counter status for emergency contraception drugs will help safeguard this important reproductive choice for yourself—and potentially all the women in your life.

###

LLP Needs Skilled Fundraisers

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And yet we have always failed to attract skilled fundraisers—people who know how to ask for funds and are not afraid to do so, people who know how to organize successful fundraising events. As a result, we are always hamstrung by our budget restraints.

So far we have accomplished marvels with a very limited budget. We spend roughly $50,000 a year. Similar organizations spend many times that amount each year. If we can generate 250,000 mail pieces on just $50,000 a year, imagine what we could do with an annual budget of $250,000!

To be truthful, we have not been living within our means. We spent roughly $50,000 in 2003 but we took in only about half that amount. We made up the difference by spending surpluses left over from prior years. Those surpluses are almost gone, however. We will not be able to depend on them in 2004.

So we really need skilled fundraisers now. We need people who know how to raise money and who are willing to do it. Our continued existence depends on us finding them—and soon. If you are a skilled fundraiser, please let us know by contacting our Chair, Lori Norman. You can reach her by enclosing a note to her with your signed letters, by e-mailing her at lori.norman@lambdaletters.org, or by calling her at (818) 785-1563. Do you have friends who are skilled fundraisers? Please urge them to contact us as well.

The future of Lambda Letters depends on us finding skilled fundraisers. Please do all you can to help us find them.

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CENTRAL COMMUNITY CHAPEL

Pastor Jerry Woodward

Worship Service
Sunday - 10:30 a.m.
Wisteria Hall
3830 U Street
Sacramento, California

Fellowship Night
Wednesday - 7:00 p.m.
Varied Locations
Call Rick at (916) 978-0365
for information

PO Box 161284
Sacramento, CA 95816-1284
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www.centralcommunitychapel.org

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